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ABSTRACT

Based on the novel and motion picture "Cry, the Beloved Country," this filmstrip program is a re-creation of the story of a black minister and a white farmer in South Africa whose lives are bound together in mutual tragedy. The three filmstrips examine the people, problems, laws, and institutions of South Africa and expose the evils of its apartheid system. Information provided in the guide for each filmstrip includes a synopsis, activities to use with students before viewing the filmstrip, a list of vocabulary terms, and themes to explore. Unit activities provided include discussion topics, ideas for creative and expository writing, topics for further investigation, and ways of comparing the novel and the filmstrip program. The guide concludes with a brief bibliography of additional fiction and non-fiction dealing with South Africa. (RM)

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*OBJECTIVES:*

1. To motivate interest in the works of Alan Paton, one of modern Africa's most important spokesmen and a writer of international acclaim.
2. To explore the complex relationships between blacks and whites in modern Africa and the nature of the apartheid system in South Africa.
3. To understand the uses of symbolism, allegory and prose style as they illuminate important literary themes.
4. To provide opportunities for cross-curriculum study, using a literary work as the basis for understanding the people, problems and institutions of modern Africa.

*ABOUT THE FILMSTRIP PROGRAM:*

A compelling and impo tant novel of South Africa, *Cry, The Beloved Country* is the story of a black minister and a white farmer whose lives are bound together in mutual tragedy. Alan Paton examines South Africa–its people, problems, laws and institutions – and exposes the evils of its apartheid system without losing his compassionate love for his native land.

This filmstrip program has been adapted from the motion picture with Sidney Poitier and Canada Lee. The screenplay was written by Alan Paton himself. Shot on location in South Africa, the filmed version is an authentic and accurate recreation of the story. Many of the actors in the original film are South Africans, and their speech echoes the beauty and cadence of their African language. This filmstrip program is an excellent introduction to a modern classic which holds great meaning for people everywhere.

## *CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

### A SOUND FILMSTRIP PROGRAM

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## *About CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

The nourishing beauty of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* is not a beauty of surfaces but the complex beauty of humanity striving, often failing, to be human. The beauty of the hills above Ixopo, achingly captured both in the novel itself and in the film version, lies not really in their lush grass and gentle mist but rather in the author's sense of their holiness and his awareness of how easily such beauty and richness can be – and has been – destroyed. The same is true of Paton's characters. Their beauty – black and white alike – lies in their mixture of fragility, vulnerability, and the holiness of a compassion that can lift up and unite human beings in the midst of anger, division, and despair.

The nature of Paton's book is one for which he had to forge new language, style, even punctuation. This book *looks* strange; it sounds strange. In dialogue and description alike it is often hard to tell precisely who is speaking and what is spoken, what thought only. This strangeness is, however, deliberate, to build into our experience of reading a sense of the ultimate irrelevance of who, finally says something, or whether it is even said. What matters is that it is thought or, more importantly, felt. *That* is what brings people together, common feeling, compassion. Two old men, one's son murdered by the other's son, meet almost wordlessly and both are moved by the pain and mystery of things. The father of the murdered son refrains from throwing an angry phrase at the other father and thus begins the process of healing.

This is a great book of wisdom and communion that come only with suffering, but it is not a weak or sentimental book. Godly Stephen Kumalo many times fails to be godly, letting anger hurt where forgiveness is needed. Father Vincent, a holy man, wishes he could cut Kumalo off because he dreads the pain of involvement. The saintly Msimangu preaches gloriously of "a world not made by hands," but many see only "fools" listening, "feeding their empty bellies on his empty words." Kumalo sees through the sentimentality of his son weeping only for himself, but the father cannot refrain from trying to hurt his son, either.

Paton, is not sentimental, or fooled. "In the dark and silent forest there is a leaf that falls. Behind the polished paneling the white ant eats away the wood. Nothing is ever quiet, except for fools." He sees the rampant disease of racism and how it is destroying black and white alike. He sees the need for change, the imperative need for justice and fair play. But he also sees something even deeper, the need for a compassion and humility that escape self-righteousness, that are always necessary before, during, and after great changes are made. Above all he sees the need for tears, not simply because South Africa has locked itself into a hateful and destructive social balance, but further because we are all human, flawed, even vicious. Paton, like Virgil, sees beyond politics, beyond customs, even beyond the noble quest for justice to the essential human interchange of person with person where evil flourishes in hundreds of tiny ways but where there are, also, tears for the affairs of people, where compassion can be cultivated.

Few of us live in South Africa, very few ever murder another person, but every one of us is an expert at wounding others, protecting ourselves. A renewed vision of the oneness and sanctity of all people, Paton seems to say, is the only force that can heal those wounds and heal ourselves. Until then, *every* beloved country will cry.

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## FILMSTRIP 1 – CRY FOR THE BROKEN TRIBE

*Parallels Chapters 1-9*

*SYNOPSIS:*

Stephen Kumalo, the poor black minister of a South African village, learns that his sister, Gertrude, needs his help and resolves to bring her home from Johannesburg. He will use this visit to the big city to look for his son, Absalom, whom he has not heard from in many months. He will also try to locate his brother, John, who left the village many years before. In the neighboring white community, James Jarvis, a prosperous farmer, is distressed to learn that his son, Arthur, has become a leading spokesman for black equality in Johannesburg. When Stephen gets to the big city, Father Msimangu tells him that Gertrude has become a prostitute. Stephen persuades her to return to the village with her son. He finds his brother, now a prosperous carpenter, and learns that Absalom has disappeared with John's son. John scolds his brother for holding on to his old fashioned beliefs in "Church and Chief" and urges him to adopt the modern values of Johannesburg.

*BEFORE VIEWING:*

1. After reading aloud from pages 3-4 in the enclosed paperback book, discuss the following questions:
   A. How does Alan Paton make use of contrast in his introduction? Is his language reminiscent of any other book? Explain.
   B. What examples of balanced sentence structure do you see in this introduction? For example, consider the sentence, "Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men." How is this balanced? Why is it effective?
   C. Notice the placement of short sentences after more complex sentences. What purpose does this serve?
2. Several characters in *Cry, The Beloved Country* have left their homes to go to Johannesburg which is described in the following way: (p. 52)

   *All roads lead to Johannesburg. If you are white or if you are black they lead to Johannesburg. If the crops fail, there is work in Johannesburg. If there are taxes to be paid, there is work in Johannesburg. If the farm is too small to be divided further, some must go to Johannesburg.*

   A. What type of city would Johannesburg have to be to satisfy all the needs of the people who move there?
   B. If most of the newcomers are poor, what problems would arise in the city?
   C. What American cities might be described in the same way?

*VOCABULARY:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| bracken (p. 3) | shod (p. 3) | umfundisi (p. 5) |
| wattles (p. 11) | lorry (p. 12) | bewildering (p. 20) |

## FILMSTRIP 1 – CRY FOR THE BROKEN TRIBE

*"Well, well my brother."*

***EXPLORING THEMES:***

1. How does Stephen Kumalo react to the arrival of a letter? Why does he behave this way?
2. Stephen Kumalo says, "They go to Johannesburg, and there they are lost, and no one hears of them at all." (P. 9) Why does "no one hear of them"?
3. Why does Stephen say that his son, sister and brother are hurting him? What does this reveal about Stephen's character?
4. How would you describe Mr. Jarvis? What character traits are revealed through his behavior?
5. Both Stephen Kumalo and Mr. Jarvis have sons who have moved to Johannesburg. Why are both men disappointed in their sons? Do the mothers share the same feelings as their husbands? Explain.
6. When Stephen Kumalo approaches Johannesburg he says, "Can we see the gold?" What does this reveal about him? How does the discussion about the gold help develop an important theme in this story?
7. The countryside of the South African valley where Stephen Kumalo lives is shown in the filmstrip, and Alan Paton says of it in *Cry, The Beloved Country*, "It is not kept, or guarded, or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men." (p. 3) What has happened to the land? Why isn't it cared for?
8. In the novel Stephen Kumalo has the following impression of Johannesburg when he sees it for the first time: (p. 17)

   *. . . great high buildings, there are red and green lights on them, almost as tall as the buildings. They go on and off. Water comes out of a bottle, till the glass is full. Then the lights go out. And when they come on again, lo the bottle is full and upright, and the glass is empty. And there goes the bottle over again. Black and white it says, black and white, though it is red and green. It is too much to understand.*

   What does Kumalo see? What purposes does this description serve? How does the description suit Kumalo's character? What is the symbolism of the neon display?
9. What does John Kumalo mean when he asks, "Have you seen the Bishop's House?" What is his attitude toward "the Church and the Chief"? Why does he feel this way? How is he different from Stephen? How has Johannesburg influenced his thinking?

## FILMSTRIP 2 – CRY FOR THE BROKEN HOUSE

*Parallels Chapters 10-20*

***SYNOPSIS:***

Stephen and Father Msimangu scour the poor neighborhoods and shanty-towns of Johannesburg looking for Absalom. They discover that he has lived in many places and may have been involved in illegal activities with John's son. At last they track him down to a reformatory (where he had been sent for stealing) and learn that he was released only a few weeks before in order to marry the girl who will bear his child. Stephen and Msimangu visit the girl and learn that Absalom has disappeared again. Stephen resolves to care for the girl and her child by taking her back with him to the village. In another part of Johannesburg, three burglars break into the house of Arthur Jarvis, shoot him when he comes upon them, and run away leaving him dead. James is stunned by his son's death and flies to Johannesburg with his wife. Later Stephen learns that the police are looking for Absalom.

***BEFORE VIEWING:***

1. In the book Father Vincent advises Stephen Kumalo in this way:

   *My friend, your anxiety turned to fear, and your fear turned to sorrow. But sorrow is better than fear. For fear impoverishes always, while sorrow may enrich. (p. 108)*

   A. What does Father Vincent mean?

   B. In what ways does fear "impoverish"?

   C. How might sorrow "enrich"?

2. In the novel Msimangu tells Stephen Kumalo:

   *Because the white man has power, we too want power . . . Some of us think when we have power, we shall revenge ourselves on the white man who has had power, and because our desire is corrupt, we are corrupted . . . But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love. Because when a man loves, he seeks no power. I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it. (pp. 39-40)*

   A. Do you agree that oppressed peoples are often corrupted by power when they attain it? Use historical examples to support your views.

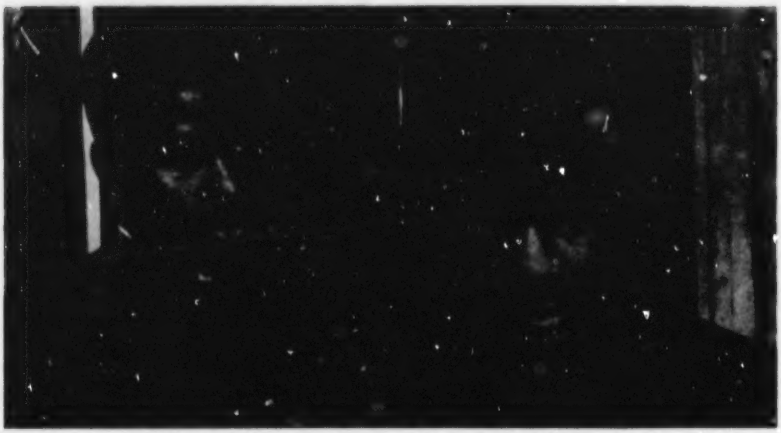
   B. Do you agree that the solution to South Africa's problems will come through love and brotherhood? Explain. What other political and/or world leaders have held this view?

   C. How would Stephen Kumalo respond to Msimangu's ideas? John Kumalo? Arthur Jarvis? James Jarvis? The current political leaders of South Africa?

***VOCABULARY:***

exposition (p. 39)
boycott (p. 4)
irresolute (p. 48)
squatters (p. 49)
listless (p. 61)
compassion (p. 68)
vacillate (p. 78)
forlorn (p. 115)

## FILMSTRIP 2 – CRY FOR THE BROKEN HOUSE



*"You do not understand. The child will be my grandchild."*

***EXPLORING THEMES:***

1. Why are people afraid to tell Stephen Kumalo news of his son, Absalom?
2. In filmstrip one Stephen Kumalo sees the gold mines and the city of Johannesburg for the first time. What new experiences does he have in filmstrip two? What is the difference between his experiences in filmstrips one and two?
3. What is the reaction of Absalom's girlfriend when Stephen Kumalo and Msimangu visit her? What does this reaction reveal about the lives of black people living in Johannesburg?
4. Why is the death of Arthur Jarvis more tragic than the death of another white South African?
5. What relationship has existed between Stephen Kumalo and Mr. Jarvis? What is unique about it? How is this relationship a symbolic one?
6. After the killing of Arthur Jarvis the narrator in the novel comments:

   *Cry for the broken tribe, for the law and the custom that is gone. Aye, and cry aloud for the man who is dead, for the woman and children bereaved. Cry, the beloved country, these things are not yet at an end. The sun pours down on the earth, on the lovely land that man cannot enjoy. He knows only the fear of his hear." (pp. 73-74)*

   What is the narrator lamenting? Where does his sympathy lie? Does he blame any one group of people for the trouble? Why? Why does he say, "Cry for the broken tribe"?
7. How does this filmstrip help explain the title, *Cry, The Beloved Country?*
8. Compare the life of the black people living in the village with life in the city. Which does the author think is better? Why? Do you agree? Why?

## FILMSTRIP 3 – CRY FOR THE BELOVED LAND

*Parallels Chapters 21-36*

***SYNOPSIS:***

In Johannesburg, James Jarvis reads Arthur's essays and begins to understand his son's ideals and accomplishments. At the funeral he is touched by the numbers of black people who attend to express their sorrow. After the funeral James demonstrates how profoundly his attitudes have changed when he shakes the hand of a black mourner. All of Stephen's fears and anxieties are confirmed when he learns that Absalom has confessed to Arthur Jarvis' murder. When he visits Absalom in prison, the boy feels such shame that he can barely speak. Later Stephen meets James Jarvis and confides his role in their mutual tragedy. James reacts with unusual gentleness and understanding. Absalom is tried and condemned to death, but his two accomplices (one of them John's son) are set free. Stephen returns to his village, and James Jarvis builds a new church for him there. Both men will remain profoundly changed by all that has happened.

***BEFORE VIEWING:***

1. Research the story of King David and his son, Absalom, in the Old Testament, II Samuel – Chapters 13-18 or in a Biblical reference book.

   A. What is the story of David and Absalom?

   B. What is Absalom's relationship with his father?

   As you watch the filmstrip, note the similarities between this Biblical story and *Cry, The Beloved Country.*

2. Read aloud pages 75-79 in the novel which describes how the white South Africans struggle with their fear of the native South Africans.

   A. What solutions to the problem are presented in these pages?

   B. What do they all have in common?

   C. How effective would each of these solutions be? Explain.

***VOCABULARY:***

symbolic (p. 108)
bereaved (p. 109)
compliance (p. 114)
sullenly (p. 122)
segregation (p. 146)
dilemma (p. 155)
jubilant (p. 167)
subsidized (p. 169)
dominion (p. 184)
bilingualism (p. 190)
reverie (p. 235)

## FILMSTRIP 3 – CRY FOR THE BELOVED LAND

*"Absalom!"*

***EXPLORING THEMES:***

1. What does Stephen Kumalo mean when he says, "If only one could have been told. This step is taken, and this step is about to be taken. If only one could have been told that"? What might he have done if he had been told?
2. In the novel James Jarvis reads a paper written by his son in which Arthur says, "From them (his parents) I learned all that a child should learn of honour and charity and generosity. But of South Africa I learned nothing at all." What does he mean? Could Absalom Kumalo have said the same thing? Explain.
3. In referring to the murderer, one character says, "If it were a white boy it wouldn't matter so much." What does he mean? Why is the reformatory official so upset after visiting Absalom in jail? How does this character provide emotional balance in the story?
4. How does James Jarvis' behavior at his son's funeral indicate that he has experienced a profound change? What has caused this change? Has his wife changed as well? Why?
5. Describe Stephen Kumalo's behavior during his first meeting with Absalom in jail. Is his behavior consistent with your earlier view of him? Why?
6. What happens when James Jarvis meets Stephen Kumalo? Why does Stephen feel the need to identify himself? How does Jarvis react? How has this confrontation affected both men?
7. In the novel the narrator says:

   ***In South Africa men are proud of their Judges, because they believe they are incorruptible. Even the black men have faith in them, though they do not always have faith in the Law. (p. 158)***

   Why do black people not have faith in the law? Who makes the law? Is justice done when the two accomplices are released? Explain.
8. When Jarvis meets Kumalo in the village he says to the priest, "How could you go? For what did my son die if you were to go away?" and "I knew a man who was in darkness until you found him." Why does he want Kumalo to stay? How would this give meaning to his son's death? Who was in darkness? Why?
9. How does *Cry, the Beloved Country* parallel the Biblical story of King David and Absalom? How are Stephen Kumalo's situation and King David's alike? different? What role does suffering, hope and redemption play in each story?

## UNIT ACTIVITIES

### *I. FOR DISCUSSION*

A. The relationship between fathers and sons is a major theme in the novel. Discuss the successes and failures of the relationship in these instances:

Arthur and James Jarvis
Stephen and Absalom Kumalo
John and Matthew Kumalo

B. The theme of education or growth may be seen as an important one in the novel. How does each of the major characters grow? Is their growth presented in a plausible way? What role does suffering play in their growth? Do the characters assume new roles as a result of their growth? Explain.

C. This story offers several suggestions to help resolve South Africa's racial inequities. What are they? How do they compare with solutions adopted by other countries? What solution would you endorse? Explain.

### *II. FOR CREATIVE AND EXPOSITORY WRITING*

A. The novel does not describe Stephen Kumalo's return to the village of Ndotsheni. Write a description of his return. You may include conversations with his wife and/or the members of his congregation.

B. Write an essay comparing John and Stephen Kumalo. What motivates each man? How does each man achieve his goals? To what extent does each man achieve his potential? Give specific examples from the novel to support your views.

C. In an essay explore Paton's style of writing. Give specific examples from the novel to support your statements. Who and what have influenced his style? Why is it effective?

D. In an essay describe the ways in which tribal society has broken down. Develop your essay through the lives of these characters: Gertrude, Absalom, John, and Mary.

### *III. FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION*

A. Martin Luther King, Jr., led a boycott of buses in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. Research this boycott and compare its effectiveness with the one in South Africa.

B. Research the status of relations between the races in South Africa today. Describe the policy of apartheid and its effect on both races. Discuss South Africa's relations with the rest of the world community.

C. Research Alan Paton's life. What connections are there between his life and *Cry, The Beloved Country?* How have his views on South African governmental policy affected his life? Explain.

D. *Cry, The Beloved Country* may be regarded as a novel of social protest. Read John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, another novel of social protest and one which is said to have influenced Paton's writing. Discuss the characteristics of this kind of novel. Compare the two works in terms of their major themes, writing styles, and effectiveness as social criticism.

### *IV. COMPARING NOVEL AND FILMSTRIP PROGRAM*

A. The episode describing the black boycott of the buses in Johannesburg was

not included in the filmed version of the story. Write an essay explaining the effects of the boycott on the blacks, on Stephen Kumalo, and on the whites who help with the protest.

B. In the novel Stephen Kumalo experiences great despair for the future of his family and his people, and Msimangu is instrumental in easing Kumalo's pain. Describe how Msimangu influences Kumalo in a positive way.

C. Read chapter 26 of the novel. How did John Kumalo achieve his status in the black society? How would you compare his status with his brother, Stephen's?

D. Read the novel and explain the role of Arthur Jarvis' son. Why is the grandson an important character? Why is the novel more powerful with this character?

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*CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

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*Too Late the Phalarope.* Another tale of racial prejudice set in South Africa.
*Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful.* Paton's most recent novel of life in contemporary South Africa.

***Non-Fiction by Alan Paton***

*Hope for South Africa.*
*Knocking on the Door.*
*The Long View.*
*South African Tragedy: The Life and Times of Jan Hofwey*r
*Towards the Mountain.* An autobiography.

***Fiction***

Abraham, Peter, *Mine Boy.* The major character is an African boy from a northern tribe trying to make his way in Johannesburg.
Bennett, Jack, *Mister Fisherman.* Racial prejudice becomes secondary when a black man and white youth struggle to survive killer whales and a storm at sea.
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Styron, William, *The Confessions of Nat Turner.* Based on the story of an actual slave rebellion, the novel explores effects of slavery on both whites and blacks.
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# FILMS INTO FILMSTRIPS

*OUTSTANDING MOTION PICTURES AS SOUND FILMSTRIP PROGRAMS*

| | |
|---|---|
| HAMLET | OF MICE AND MEN |
| THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER | WUTHERING HEIGHTS |
| ALICE IN WONDERLAND | WHERE THE RED FERN GROWS |
| AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE | THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER |
| THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES | TOM SAWYER/HUCKLEBERRY FINN |
| THE LORD OF THE RINGS | CRIME AND PUNISHMENT |
| THE BLACK STALLION | THE CALL OF THE WILD/THE SEA WOLF |
| WATERSHIP DOWN | LOUIS L'AMOUR'S AMERICAN WEST |
| A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM | THE RED PONY |
| SEVEN ALONE | EMIGRANTS/THE NEW LAND |
| BORN FREE | CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY |
| JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG | OTHELLO |
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